

Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools



Introduction

Most schools already have a code of behaviour, and the Guidelines do not expect schools to prepare a new code. An audit of the existing code is the starting point for every school that already has a code of behaviour. This checklist has been developed to assist schools in carrying out the audit.

Doing an Audit

The audit process allows the school to check for completeness and compliance with legal requirements and good practice as set out in the Guidelines. It is an opportunity to notice and celebrate good practice in the school and to confirm good work already undertaken in the development and operation of the code of behaviour.

The audit will identify those aspects of the code that are working well, and will reveal any differences between the practice suggested by the Guidelines and the operation of the code. The audit will also identify areas that the Guidelines suggest should be covered but that are not addressed by the existing code.

When the audit is completed, it will provide information about what work needs to be done, and the school can then make a plan for any changes that are needed. Schools are already familiar with this cycle of review, planning and action through the process of school development planning.

Who does this work?

The Principal and staff, or a small group representing staff, parents and the Board of Management, will usually conduct the audit, having familiarised themselves with the Guidelines. It's useful to involve people who know the school and the operation of the existing code of behaviour well and also to have a range of perspectives in completing the audit.

The audit checklist

The audit questions are largely based on the key requirements that are summarised in 'Blue Boxes' at the end of most chapters in the Guidelines.

In general, questions in the checklist are framed as yes/no questions. The questions can be answered based on a knowledge and familiarity with the school and, usually, without having to gather any new information. You may

want to use the Notes column to record the school policies, practices or activities you are taking into account in answering the question.

Where the information available allows you to answer 'yes' to an audit question, you are satisfied that no further development is required to be in compliance with the Guidelines in relation to the area covered by the question.

Where the information you have prompts you to answer 'no' to an audit question, you are identifying this as an area that needs further work in order to comply with the Guidelines.

If you are not sure what is covered by a particular audit question, it may be useful to refer to the relevant section(s) of the Guidelines that are noted alongside each question.

Where the audit identifies aspects of the school code that need to be reviewed or addressed, the Board of Management, together with the Principal, should prioritise these areas and develop an action plan, with a timeframe, for doing this work. You should keep a record of the completed audit and any plans arising from it.

**National Educational Welfare Board
August 2008**

Audit of School Code of Behaviour

School _____ Date _____

Audit team _____

How the school Code of Behaviour was developed

See Chapter 2 *Auditing and reviewing the code of behaviour*

Audit Question	Y	N	Notes
Were staff, students and parents consulted and involved in the development of the current school code of behaviour?			

Understanding Behaviour

See Chapter 4 *Understanding Behaviour*

Audit Question	Y	N	Notes
Does the school give staff opportunities to discuss and share their understandings about behaviour?			
Does the school have ways to help parents to understand how they can help students to behave well at school?			
Does the school have ways of helping students to take responsibility for their behaviour and relationships?			

Whole school approach

See Chapter 5 *A whole-school approach to the code of behaviour*

Audit Question	Y	N	Notes
Are key policies and practices checked to see how they impact on student behaviour?			
Do staff have opportunities to work as a team to develop a whole-school approach to behaviour?			
Do parents and students have an opportunity to contribute to school policy?			

Setting Standards of Behaviour

See Chapter 6 *Setting Standards of Behaviour*

Audit Question	Y	N	Notes
Does the school have clear standards of behaviour for everyone?			
Does the school have a range of ways of communicating these standards to students, staff and parents?			
Were students involved in developing the school rules ?			
Are students involved in developing classroom rules ?			
Does the school have ways of ensuring that students with special needs understand what is expected of them?			

Promoting good behaviour

See Chapter 7 *Promoting good behaviour*

Audit Question	Y	N	Notes
Is there a plan for promoting good behaviour in the school?			
Did staff, students, parents and BOM contribute to the plan?			
Is the plan reviewed from time to time?			

Responding to Inappropriate Behaviour

See Chapter 8 *Responding to inappropriate behaviour*

Audit Question	Y	N	Notes
Has the school an agreed set of strategies for helping students to change inappropriate behaviour?			
Has the school a written policy on how sanctions are used to help students?			
Do named members of staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in relation to behaviour?			
Does the school have a standardised way for staff to record matters to do with student behaviour?			
Does the school have written policies about bullying and harassment?			

Implementing the School Code of Behaviour

See Chapter 9 *Implementing the code of behaviour*

Audit Question	Y	N	Notes
Does the school have a range of ways of communicating the Code of Behaviour to staff, students and parents?			
Does the school have a written Code?			
Apart from giving parents the written code, does the school do anything else to help parents to understand and support the code?			
Are there lesson plans and programmes to help students to learn the skills and knowledge they need in order to behave well?			
Does the school monitor patterns of behaviour in the school?			
Is there a standard system in the school for keeping records about behaviour?			
Are there recognised ways for staff, students and parents to raise concerns about behaviour or to make complaints?			
Has the school advised parents about how they should notify a child's absence from school?			

Suspension

See Chapter 10 *Suspensions and expulsions: legal and procedural requirements* & Chapter 11 *Suspension*

Audit Question	Y	N	Evidence
Does the school have a policy on and written procedures for the use of suspension?			
Are these approved by the Board of Management?			
Do staff, students and parents know about the policy on and procedures for the use of suspension?			
Has the school got fair procedures for investigation for making decisions?			
Is there a system for regular review by the Board of Management of the use of suspension in the school?			

Expulsion

See Chapter 10 *Suspensions and expulsions: legal and procedural requirements* & Chapter 12 *Expulsion*

Audit Question	Y	N	Evidence
Does the school have a policy on and written procedures for the use of expulsion?			
Are these approved by the Board of Management?			
Do staff, students and parents know about the policy on and procedures for the use of expulsion?			
Has the school got fair procedures for investigation for making decisions?			
Are there procedures for informing parents and students about their right to appeal?			
Is there a system for regular review by the Board of Management of the use of expulsion in the school?			

Sample Plan arising from audit

Following the audit of the school code of behaviour, the next step is to prepare a plan and a set of priorities for addressing the areas you have identified as needing more work. The plan should be approved by the Board of management

Priorities

If any aspect of your current code of behaviour is not in keeping with legal obligations, or if some legal obligation is not being met, this aspect should get priority.

You might wish also to prioritise:

- The areas where a change could have a very positive impact quickly
- Things that could be changed quickly

What an action plan might look like

Aspect needing work	Work to be done	Priority (high, medium, low)	Timeframe	Who will be involved
Procedures for use of suspension	Full review	High	January – March 2009	Board of Management, Principal, representatives of staff and parents and, if appropriate, students
Understanding behaviour	Arrange talks on behaviour for staff meeting Propose talk for parent association AGM meeting	Medium	January to June	Guidance Counsellor and Post holder
School standards	Communicate again to all	High	Immediately	Principal, Year Heads and Class teachers
Classroom rules	Ask teachers to discuss classroom rules with students	High	Ongoing	All teaching staff